

Aurora and our Congresswoman, our former colleague, Congresswoman Giffords, and Virginia Tech and many places, and Lone Star College in my district and the tragedy at the University of Maryland that just occurred in the last 24 hours. People are mourning. We have to stop gun violence. So I don't want to hear the fact that the President is divisive. The President is leading, and he has led well.

The American people are listening. When are our friends on the other side of the aisle going to listen? And when are the American people going to raise up beyond the maze of television commentary and see that your voices can be heard? If you raise up literally in the houses of worship and civic clubs and say that Congress must do its job for our soldiers who are coming home and for those children who are the future and for the opportunity for growth, you bring down the debt by growing the economy and innovating.

Congratulations, Mr. President, for the research and manufacturing centers—15. Let's do more of them. I hope that we can get summer youth jobs, a program of private and public cooperation. When does a youth take up a gun? They take it up when they don't have a summer job and when they don't have an opportunity. So I want to challenge this body to be the kind of Lincoln-esque attitude, as yesterday was the official birthday of President Lincoln, February 12. And although it was a tragic time in our history, I can assure you that it showed the greatest promise of America when people could come together and do something great. I stand here as a freed slave because this Congress came together. Are we going to be able to do it today to free America?

THE DEBT CEILING

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. QUIGLEY) for 5 minutes.

Mr. QUIGLEY. Mr. Speaker, last month we passed a bill that suspends the debt ceiling until May. I voted for that bill because I didn't want to plunge the credit rating of this country or have the economy plunge into another recession. But that vote was just a short-term fix in what has been a series of short-term fixes. And short-term fixes no longer cut it when it comes to running the world's biggest economy.

Instead of thoughtful, long-term planning, we have contented ourselves with political sideshows. We've budgeted with continuing resolutions and held endless partisan committee hearings aimed at dismantling so-called job-killing legislation like the Clean Air Act. We voted 33 times to repeal all or part of the President's health care plan, and we attempted to balance the Federal Government's budget by zeroing out Planned Parenthood. That's not careful planning. That's tired political dogma.

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In a famous speech about the Vietnam war, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., said, "We are confronted by the fierce urgency of now."

We again find ourselves in a conflict that threatens the political fabric of our Nation, the integrity of our institutions. We face a mountain of debt. We lack a comprehensive approach to climate change, energy, transportation, Medicare, Social Security, defense spending, immigration reform, gun violence, and even our postal system.

We need to find that urgency to get started on creating a sensible energy policy that confronts climate change and reduces our reliance on foreign oil.

We need that urgency to formulate a transportation plan so that States can address their crumbling infrastructure and local businesses can get back to work.

We need that urgency of now to reconfigure our security policy, making sensible cuts and fashioning a force that prepares us for conflicts of the future and not the past.

We need the urgency of now to make sensible changes to Social Security and Medicare to ensure the vitality of these programs for generations to come.

That urgency of now will reward us with more than a sensible energy policy, good roads, a smarter defense department, and sustainable social welfare system. We will be rewarded with a stable economy and reduced market volatility.

We cannot wait to act. We are borrowing 42 cents for every dollar we spend. We have to take sensible steps to begin reducing our debt without stepping on a fragile economic recovery. We have to take steps that are big, bold, and bipartisan. That's why I signed onto the Cooper-LaTourette bipartisan budget agreement that would have saved \$4 trillion over 10 years, and that's why my office authored a comprehensive plan to reinvent government and save taxpayers \$2 trillion over the next 10 years.

No, government is not perfect. But I believe we need to reinvent government, not eliminate it. Or, as Grover Norquist says, make "it small enough to drown in the bathtub."

Government is important. The heroes of 9/11 were government workers. Government teaches our kids; it protects us, keeps us safe, helps keep our air clean, and protects the less fortunate.

The Tea Party has this wrong. The objective should not be to destroy government through reactive draconian cuts; rather, we should collectively rethink and renew this institution that touches all of our lives.

I recognize that not everyone I serve would agree on how to cut defense and adjust social programs to make them sustainable over time. That's the whole point. You have to compromise. Sadly, that's not in vogue these days. My colleague from Chicago, Congressman BOBBY RUSH, said it best when he

observed, "In Congress, the view of compromise is that the other guy gives in."

It simply can't be that way. Until we end the bickering, political preening, and brinksmanship, the deadlock that has paralyzed our political process will continue.

As Lincoln said, "It is not can any of us imagine better, but can we do better?"

And those words are true today. We have to abandon the dogmas of yesterday to fulfill the promise of tomorrow.

"We cannot escape history," he said. "We of this Congress and this administration will be remembered in spite of ourselves."

Despite this immense challenge that confronts us, I believe we will prevail. If we can summon that urgency of now, if we can end the bitter partisanship and poor planning; we can solve our Nation's problems and make a brighter day for ourselves and generations to come.

FUTURE OF THE FMLA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California (GEORGE MILLER) for 5 minutes.

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. Mr. Speaker, I read with interest Majority Leader CANTOR's speech last week on the majority's latest relaunch of the House GOP's attempt to identify with the middle class.

Leader CANTOR said that the House will pursue an agenda of health, happiness, and prosperity for more Americans and their families. He went on to identify a very important problem for millions of Americans: how to balance work and family.

Unfortunately, that was the end of the relaunch. Because to address this problem, the majority leader proposed an old scheme that actually takes away workers' rights to overtime pay in exchange for employer-controlled comp time. This scheme has been bouncing around the Big Business wish list for decades. It's a twofer for Big Business: workers get less predictable schedules, and they earn less pay.

Leader CANTOR's prescription for what ails working families is to administer more poison. It's to give a working parent less control over her life and less money in her pocket. This plan does not give workers flexibility. This plan is about giving corporations another way to pay workers less.

That's how you help working families? I don't think so.

If the Republican majority party wants to seriously talk about healthy, prosperous, and happy American families, then they should help to create real opportunities to help families to be healthy, prosperous, and happy.

Here's one serious way to help working families: give workers real flexibility on the job and the ability to take advantage of paid time off.

Last week was the 20th anniversary of the Family and Medical Leave Act.